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DOCUMENTARY film news

VOL. 7 NO. 62 FEBRUARY 1948

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CONTENTS

This month's cover still is from *Children Learning by Experience* reviewed in this issue

Editorial 13

Notes of the Month 14

What shall it profit a man?
Ken Cameron 15

Graduation from Newsreel
James Harris 16

English Diary
Arndt von Rautenfeld 17

New Documentary Films
Noted by DFN Reviewing Panel 18, 19

New Books on Film 20

More New Films 21

British Film Academy 21

Children's Cinema
D. George Bennell 22

Correspondence 23, 24

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FEBRUARY FILLDYKE

THE dark, dank month of February is as good a time as any other to look around. There is quite a lot going on. Parliament has debated the new Films Bill, and the Committee of Inquiry is completing its investigations into the British Film Institute. Now there is the chance that the industry as a whole may be able to pull itself together and take real advantage of the opportunities offered by the Films Bill and by the dollar-saving situation, however that works out. From the Film Institute inquiry we may hope for the creation, at long last, of a real centre and focus point for all those film activities which deal with the film as an art, as a social force and as an historical phenomenon. It is to be hoped incidentally that the new British Film Academy will prove a really vigorous and forthright weapon for all those in the trade itself who are tired of extravagance on the one hand and shoddy ideas on the other.

As far as documentary is concerned the most important thing needed is a new and lively approach to the problems of film-production. We need fewer formula pictures, and more experiment, more reality (look at the Italian films), more social courage, and more gaiety and humour. One of the ways to achieve this is to widen the horizon by making closer contacts with documentary workers in other countries. A good start in this direction was made during 1947. The setting up of the World Union of Documentary after the Brussels meeting was followed in this country by the formation of a new organization called British Documentary, designed not only to look after our representation on WUD, but also to be a real action-centre for all people connected with the documentary movement. Whether British Documentary succeeds will depend entirely on the amount of interest shown in it by its members, particularly the younger ones; and this in turn will depend on the film-making opportunities becoming a good deal more exciting than they are at present.

It will be important to seize every chance which may be offered by the new Films Act for voluntary as opposed to sponsored production. The development of the short-story type of film along documentary lines for instance is long overdue. Meantime a close watch must be kept on the sponsored field, not least as far as the Government is concerned.

Finally no one should forget that at Mexico City the Mass Media side of UNESCO was heavily strengthened. In particular there is the plan for international film production, by which countries will be asked to produce films for an agreed programme of 48 films, divided into eight series of six films each. This country can make a big contribution to such a scheme, not only in terms of direct production but also by supplying technicians to other countries whose industries are not so fully developed as our own.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Congratulations

OUR LAST issue appeared before the announcement of the Birthday Honours, but our congratulations to Michael Balcon on his Knighthood are none the less sincere for being belated. Of all people in the British Film Industry, Balcon deserves honour, not merely for his general services (which anyone can remind themselves of by reading "Michael Balcon's 25 Years in Films") but also because of his constant insistence on honesty and sincerity. We remember, too, that he was the first to combine the experience of documentary with the experience of the feature studio.

We also congratulate Arthur Elton on his marriage to Margaret Ann Adamson, who is herself an experienced worker in documentary films, having been with the National Film Board of Canada and with Stuart Legg in New York.

*

British Documentary

THE FIRST meeting of BRITISH DOCUMENTARY took place on January 14th. It was gratifying to note that somewhere about 150 people turned up, representing every possible aspect of documentary, from the big sponsors to the boy who makes the tea. The meeting was introduced by Sir Stephen Tallents and addressed by John Grierson, who came specially over from Paris for the purpose. It looks as though BRITISH DOCUMENTARY is going to do a really important job, and everybody will await with interest the detailed working plans which the meeting commissioned the Council to draw up. The influence which BRITISH DOCUMENTARY can exert, both at home and overseas, is considerable, particularly if it sticks closely to its policy of giving the younger members of the movement the fullest part in the urgent and responsible jobs before it. Those who read the completely misleading report of the meeting in *John Bouverie's Diary* in the *News Chronicle* may rest assured that the new organization has been formed to help and not to hinder the progress of the documentary film.

*

Films and the Colonies

THE COLONIAL films conference held by the British Film Institute on Friday, January 16th, was a most interesting and well-attended meeting. Sir Stephen Tallents, John Grierson, George Pearson and others addressed the delegates and the following resolutions were suggested at the end of the conference:

It is resolved that the Government should give immediate consideration to:

1. The development of the Colonial Film Unit.
2. The provision of films for fundamental education in the Colonies.
3. The training of Colonies for active participation in the active production of films.
4. The wide extension of distribution facilities.
5. The training of Colonial citizens in the technique of distribution.
6. The development of research into the facts of both educational and entertainment films to illiterate audiences.
7. The provision of an informed centre to collect and collate all information on the use and production of films among the primitive.
8. The production of films about the Colonies for the benefit of the British Commonwealth as a whole.
9. Studying the possibility of raising the funds for the encouragement of the above subject.

We hope to hear more of this most important question in the near future.

The Films Bill

THE BILL'S Second Reading took place on Wednesday, January 21s and its further consideration now passes to a committee of th House. During the course of the next two or three weeks, therefor the Bill will be subjected to a more detailed scrutiny and the variou amendments tabled will come up for consideration. In the case o the provisions for 'supporting films' the documentary and special ized film producers have pointed to the need for coping wit the problem of marketing conditions. Greater access to screen space is, by itself, not enough unless documentary and short film can obtain a fairer percentage of the box-office takings.

*

Shorts

SCIENTIFIC Film Association Conference on Agriculture, held o January 17th, was lively and well worth listening to. The speaker included Mr Goodman and Dr Slater (Ministry of Agriculture Mr Vesselo (Central Film Library), Mr Kenny, Mr Fell and M Anstey. Afterwards, in the evening, there was a film show.

*

THE London Area Association of Film Societies has held its in augural meeting, decided on a constitution and formed a com mittee. We wish them good luck.

*

DOCUMENTARY FILM NEWS has just prepared a list of the newe documentary films suitable for showing to Film Societies. The li names about 30 films and will be brought up to date every fe months. Price sixpence (post free) to Film Society secretaries.

*

THE Ministry of Education has announced the formation of th *Educational Foundation for Visual Aids*. Its functions will include

(*a*) Securing production of visual aids through commercial under takings and other channels.

(*b*) Purchasing or obtaining visual aids for disposal to local educa tion authorities, schools, libraries and other educational insti tutions.

(*c*) Arranging at suitable centres for the exhibition, storage and ser vicing of visual aids.

(*d*) Assisting the formation of regional and local libraries on visua aids.

(*e*) Facilitating the interchange of visual aids with the Commo wealth and foreign countries.

(*f*) Arranging for the collection and dissemination of informatio on visual aids.

*

FOLLOWING the University Films' Conference held last Novembe it has been decided to hold a meeting of delegates in Februar with the intention of setting up a Films' Council to enable Un versities in the British Isles to exchange ideas and look into prob lems of production and distribution and accessibility of films us ful to the student or professor.

* * *

???

KINE WEEKLY wins the prize for the best headline of last month A short excerpt from the British Council's annual report mentionin the production of films by the Central Office of Information headed

BRITISH COUNCIL FILMS
A new Odeon Service.

Well, well! Rank marches on.

Ken Cameron asks

What Shall It Profit a Man?

As usual, we must remind readers that the views expressed in any article (even one written by a member of the Board) do not necessarily coincide with those of the Board.—ED.

body responsible for the organization and regulation of the working lives of those engaged in the technique of British film production known as the Association of Cine and Allied Technicians. This rather implies a proficiency in technical executance as opposed to the more creative work of the artist. This of course is not intended, and a film always has been and always will be known as the work of a director, or a writer, or a producer. The names of those who actually expose the film are rarely familiar to the audience. Perhaps that is a little unfortunate, but the highlights of the more functional of the population are apt to be hidden beneath bushels.

The technician is, after all, a very important person. The most far-reaching of films of educational or social significance would for ever remain in the minds of those who conceived them were it not for the individuals who press the right knobs at the right time. But in documentary as in the feature film phrases such as 'creative treatment of actuality' and 'drama in the living fact', coined by Grierson and hacknied by his disciples, all ignore the work of the men who act as pure technicians behind the camera. And even the densest ninepenny must realize if it was put to him that the increasing number of studios soon to open or reopen in this country will create a demand for skilled technical people which will rapidly swallow up the unfortunate bulk of ACAT's list of unemployed. And what are we doing to supply that demand?

Apprenticeship

The new apprenticeship scheme has been planned and discussed far too long. It is absurd that a plan of such obvious benefit to producer and worker alike should only now be reaching the stage of possible operation. Hitherto a potential newcomer to the industry could achieve his wish only if he knew somebody of influence. And then he was lucky if he entered the branch best suited to him, and phenomenally lucky if he got a well thought out training, not only in that branch but also in the allied crafts of those working around him. And we cannot deny that a grounding in editing would help a cameraman to do his job well.

This apprenticeship scheme, evolved jointly by the ACAT and the BFPA, is due to start operation early this year, but as this is being written the details are not fully known. It is, however, recognized that newcomers to the industry can do so only by undergoing the training that it entails. This should do a lot to cut down the number of passengers carried by most producing organizations. That section of film production personnel which is supposed to work with its head rather than its hands is a happy hunting ground for deadheads whose contribution to the country's movie output is pathetically small.

But even when this apprenticeship plan is operating, just how are we in documentary going to get on? The dividing line between feature and documentary is real enough by the very nature of the films and those who make them. The inevitable difference in salary ratings makes this line much more formidable. Certainly the companies who do not cater for the theatrical market cannot be expected to pay the inflated salaries now prevailing in the major studios; that is unless the results of the new Films Act are far more satisfactory than we ever dare hope. But somehow or other this fact must not prejudice documentary's chances of recruiting worth-while newcomers. And by worth while we also mean those who will not take the first opportunity of leaving the movement for the attractions outside. The tendency to get into the industry by way of the documentary film, to get a good training there, and to leave it as soon as his company is beginning to get value for the training, has been far too common during recent years. The skill and adaptation needed for our type of film is every bit as highly developed as that for the feature picture—in some ways a whole lot more so. Documentary is not a school for Denham, and must not be looked upon as such.

Crown Film Unit

Recent developments would indicate that a larger proportion of Government-sponsored films will be handed over to the Crown Film Unit for production. This Unit at Beaconsfield has technical facilities which are, or soon will be, no mean item in this country's film making potential. It has technicians whose standard of workmanship during the past years has shown that they are quite capable of giving the necessary quality of work. But whether it has enough of these vital factors to cope with all the work understood to be coming its way is questionable. It is not the easiest thing in the world to attract cameramen who can undergo with equanimity the rigours of a British location in these piping days—and our best work is still done many miles from the convenience of the studio and the comfort of the home—and who will produce technical excellence on the screen in spite of the war-weary equipment which is all that most of us can offer.

Certainly the blame for the dilatoriness in putting the new scheme into full operation does not lie exclusively on any one body. Such a plan to be efficient must cost money, and it is never too easy to get funds for the most worthy of causes.

The Law of the Closed Shop

One wonders whether the attitude of ACAT these days is entirely beyond reproach. The Union is maintaining a rigid adherence to the unwritten and quite unwarranted Law of the Closed Shop, and while bringing all its guns to bear upon trivial and doctrinaire details it has successfully avoided the main issue of keeping its membership not only well looked after, but united. It is certainly high time for those members who do not altogether agree with present policy to take a less inactive attitude, and to say at their studio meetings and at the annual general meeting, just precisely what they think. The reluctance of so many of the rank and file to take office and to attend the AGM leaves the way far too clear for those of an extremist viewpoint whose eagerness to be agin everything and everybody is not tempered by any readiness to see anybody else's point of view.

Unfortunate

Just how much the policy which is sometimes tantamount to obstructionism prevailing in some units at the moment is dictated by the General Council, and how much emerges from private decisions made by local shop stewards and their intimate confreres is hard to determine. It would be unfortunate to say the least if the Union's democratic ideals were jeopardized by the few autocrats who rule the far too rare full studio meetings, and present *faits accomplis* to their obedient if somewhat sheeplike satellites. They smugly stigmatize their critics as reactionary, and maintain their nattering-in-the-corner tactics under the impression that they are considered the altruistic saviours of mankind. Some of them are all too quickly developing into the self-appointed destroyers of the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Money for Jam

In the past ACAT has done work of inestimable value. Salary rates and working conditions have reached levels undreamt of before the war, although the cost of living has done its best to keep pace. But can the General Council not see that all upgrade movement is bound sometime to reach a point when it becomes downgrade? And when one gets near that point it is wise to stop and think for a moment. We must not proceed further with a policy which makes it impossible for an enthusiastic technician who looks upon his job as something more than a vehicle for gaining his daily bread—with butter and jam on both sides—to work all night long if the spirit moves him. The Union has done great work in the past. OK. But the sweat shop has become the closed shop, and the Half Crown Unit is rapidly becoming the Money For Jam Unit.

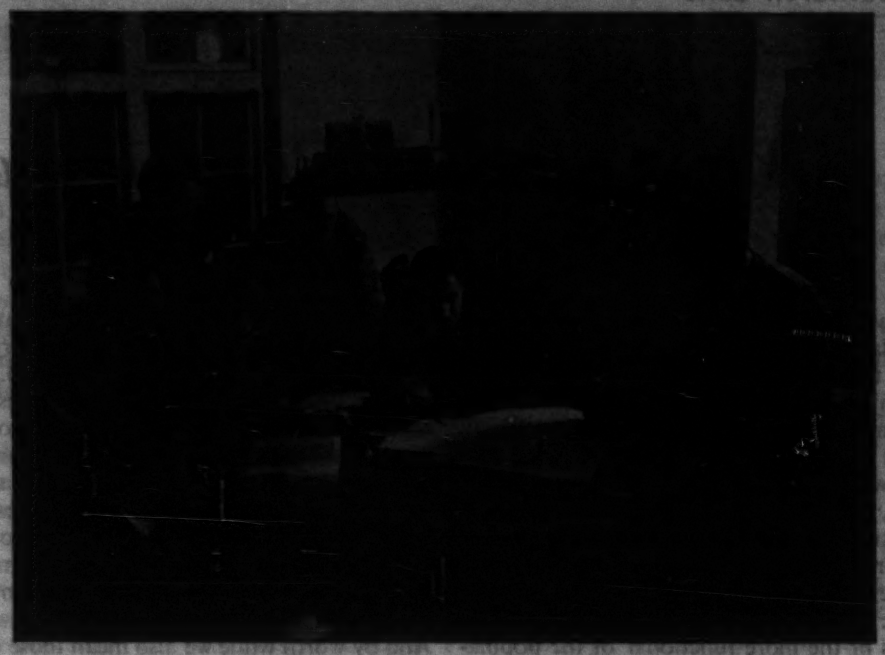
Of course the solution is obvious if we can only see it through. We, that is all of us who value our jobs and think our work worth while, must examine very thoroughly any action which tends in any way to discourage rather than encourage production. And if that action smacks too much of stubborn inflexibility and not enough of commonsense, then it must be gently but very firmly put in its place. It is a pity, but some of the ordinary decent members of this industry are going to have to do a little quiet propaganda work themselves to combat the skulduggery of the rest.

the *film* overseas

Graduation from Newsreel

by

James Harris



A New Zealand National Film Unit Conference

THE New Zealand National Film Unit, which came into being to hold the mirror to New Zealand, has now to consider the projection of New Zealand before the world. Involved in this is a change in approach to subjects and a change in style. Owing to local circumstances the change is broadly one to Documentary from newsreel.

Until six years ago few things were rarer upon the screens of New Zealand than scenes of New Zealand life. The citizen of a country thus absent from view, or seen only through foreign eyes and lenses, is apt to think his country has something lacking. Thus films of New Zealand, when they did begin to appear in quantity, not only provided a medium through which to pass wartime information to the public, but also began to fill a blank area in the outlook of the local picture-goer.

The 1941 event was the setting up of the New Zealand National Film Unit, based upon the existing Government Film Studios which had made films of scenery for the Tourist Department. The Unit's birth followed a report to the Government made by John Grierson. It's wartime *raison d'etre* was wartime publicity, including internal national publicity, the building of national self-confidence. The backbone of its production programme for all of its six years of development has been the newsreel *NZ Weekly Review*. The Government concentrated their film efforts upon newsreel for the very simple reason that there being no commercial newsreel in New Zealand this field was the easiest one in which to get wide and regular distribution. In technique however *Weekly Review* has averaged somewhere between newsreel and documentary, in the manner of a ciné-magazine.

At the present time *Weekly Review* averages about 800 ft per issue, goes out on a 17-print distribution and occupies the whole time of six or eight of the production staff. The typical reel contains three subjects, probably one sporting or topical, one of farming or country interest, and one industrial or scientific. Every few weeks though the whole reel goes to one subject, and these one-subject *Weekly Reviews* are in fact short documentaries made at a newsreel rate of production. The problem before the Unit at the present time is to make instructional films for local use, and documentaries for overseas, with the same speed and efficiency that it has developed in the handling of its regular weekly release.

Though the NZNFU staff have experience in documentary, nevertheless for any of them to turn from the newsreel to other types of work always proves to be difficult, the difficulty lying not so much in doing the new thing well as in doing it with the old efficiency, in keeping up the speed that went into newsreel-making to a weekly deadline when not working to a deadline at all. New Zealand films like all films need to be of good quality or they fail in their purpose, but they also need to be economically made, for many films are required and staff and gear limited.

In addition to the weekly newsreel release many of the short newsreel items have been collected into long 16 mm reels to give a general picture of the life and the country, and issued to libraries under the general title of *New Zealand Diary*. Demands from London for 16 mm silent films are also being met.

The main physical asset of the NZNFU is the Government Film Studio at Miramar, just over the hill from Wellington Heads and about six miles by road from the city. The studio, a single-story brick building, contains a 60 ft by 80 ft sound-stage, offices, theatre, 35 mm and 16 mm laboratories, cutting-rooms, workshops, vaults and garage. Thus everything from scripting and camera-repairs to dispatching the finished prints is done in the one building. Equipment includes a pair of Mitchell cameras for double-system sound shooting, single-system sound camera for newsreel work, a good assortment of modern lighting gear and a couple of portable generators. When the Unit first moved in only rack-and-tank development was available for negative, but n all development is by machine.

Up till now *NZ Weekly Review* has been capital things to the NZNFU; it has been ba bone, mainspring, heart, soul and bread-a butter. It was this weekly reel that secured w theatrical distribution for the Unit's came work, and it was the six years of working t weekly deadline that kept the Unit moving fast to get into the rut of 'regular channe If the Government newsreel has to be dropp (as may happen, since distribution to a public under two million is a difficult thing to m pay) then its loss will be regretted by N Zealand audiences, and by that small but impo ant part of its audience, the troops in Jap Whether the weekly reel is retained or whethe goes, the experience of turning it out has b up at Miramar a self-contained Film Unit wh should be able to turn with confidence to new tasks which the Dominion may require i perform.

OVERSEAS NEWS

UNESCO in 1948

The allocation of almost one million dollars for Mass Communications is the largest single item in UNESCO budget for 1948. It is to be spent on the following main projects. An International Ideas Bureau will employ creative artists and writers to prepare stories of world co-operation and achievement. This material will be used to promote the production of articles, books, broadcast programmes, documentary and feature films by member countries. In the field of radio UNESCO will prepare special programme material, and will set up flying squads of radio experts to maintain contact between UNESCO and the national systems. A World University of the Air will provide radio programmes putting leading personalities in education, sciences and the arts on the air. The Survey of Press, Radio and Film Needs will be extended to the Far East, Latin America and South Asia. Loans, barter schemes and exchange of technicians are am the remedies proposed to meet the needs countries found to be lacking essential Pr radio and film resources.

The main emphasis in 1948 will be on prod tion. UNESCO'S Film Section has alre drawn up a programme of 48 films which member countries are expected to include their current production programmes. The budget allocations are designed to stimu further production in all fields of mass c munication.

The Price of Peace

UNESCO has been criticized lately in on two British journals for failing in the past yea get to grips with the problems of world educa and understanding. In a recent broadcast J

Cont. foot col. 1 next

A German visits us

English Diary

A short monthly release made by the COI has just been completed and will be reviewed in our next issue—'KRO Germany 1947' makes post-war film history by being the first film made in Germany by a team of English and German technicians. In this article the cameraman of the Junge Film-Union gives his impressions of a subsequent visit to England.

HARD to believe—but it's a fact: here I am in train for British Civil Personnel on my way to land.

had scarcely finished my last shots for a umentary film—produced by the Junge n Union, Hamburg, for the Crown Film Unit London—when the director, Mr Graham llace and the supervisor, Mr Arthur Elton, ed me if I would like to study film-production England. What a question! Naturally I said s' (thinking to myself: 'this may cause you e trouble, to get permission'. And I had no e at all.)

Who will describe my astonishment, when e weeks later I held in my hands a passport travel-permission and Dutch Visa!

And now I find myself really in the CCG-in, and every passing minute brings me nearer the Channel. I have now entered a sphere, which thousands of starving Germans dare even dream. The first step of the fairy-tale is dining-car. Tea with sugar and milk, meat, ets. I feel like in heaven, though somebody t to my table says: 'Really nothing particular.'

The train stops in Utrecht. No doubt, there is a reshment-hall. You may step in and buy cakes, l cakes and chocolate—supposing you have ilders or Sterlings.

It was already night when we arrived at Hook Holland. A brand-new ship, ready to take us r the Channel. My cabin heated, and with rm water and clean towels. We passed through Customs. This time I had a good conscience. e contents of my handbags, some poor under-ar, old shoes and a very old suit could not erest them.

We are now in England, and again I find myself a dining-car. What a car. While eating I per-ve how my undernourished body begins to feel onger. But what will happen, if the waiter asks our ration-cards? Mr Wallace shakes his head. tion-cards? Not in trains or restaurants.

The train hastens through fields and meadows. erywhere I see groups of trees, standing amidst fields. Before I came to this country I was d the English were dreary businessmen. But as I see these people must like nature; they like those trees. That means a good feeling for the beauty of this world.

London—Liverpool St. Station. What a traffic! Buses, buses,—taxis and cars. My goodness, what a life! Well-dressed, well-fed people everywhere. But there, at the corner a grey face, bad shoes, a poor overcoat. Those eyes look hungry. They look at me as if they would ask for help. Suddenly I feel ashamed. I should speak to him. Excuse me, good man, I cannot give you anything, I'm a beggar somehow myself, coming from that big Ghetto Germany. And I have to go back there, to be hungry again and with very little hope for my future. Maybe you do not know it, but you are enjoying here peace-life, and for you this world is open. You may go where you like to.

A cloud of noise sweeps this vision away. 'Watch your step, Sir!' 'Oh,—sorry!' (This is the first time that an Englishman calls me 'Sir'). Oh, yes. I'm in England now. Look first right and then left! What an automat a modern person is. All these seventeen days in England I looked the wrong way, when crossing a street.

Somehow I must have been yet under the influence of war-propaganda, before I came to this town; I expected to see at least fifty per cent of all buildings flat. As I insisted upon visiting a place in London where I could see any comparable (with Hamburg or Berlin) devastations, I had to make a special trip to the South-East of London.

It took me some time before I became accustomed to see shop-windows full of clothes, sweets, food-provisions, fruits. They told me, that everything was rationed, that's true. But in England you may eat in every restaurant as much as you like without ration-cards. I found the British Housewives quite nervous about the rationing in their country. I wish each of them could come to spend some weeks in Germany. No doubt, they would feel like in heaven after their return to England.

Two questions asked to me made me smile: in a corner of a secret place in London I saw a balance. A sign on its top asked: Have rations altered your weight?—And in Glasgow a Scottish lady asked me seriously if German rations were much better than those in Britain.

As a film-man I am principally interested in film-production. On my request I was shown several studios. They are quite busy there, and they are doing remarkable work. The outfit is superior. Maybe they have a bit too many people on the stage while shooting. There is a limit, above which things become too complicated, if there is too much personnel. I saw large studios and I accompanied small groups on exterior-shooting. Everywhere on my way I made the acquaintance of a lady who is much estimated on the British Islands. Her name is 'courtesy'. And in fact, politeness in public life, as it is practised in Britain, is a very agreeable thing. It makes daily life so much easier. People in this country like their personal freedom; they prefer small houses, each for one family. But at the same time they seem not to be interested in any manifestation of individualism: London has an enormous quantity of small family-houses, but the houses of a whole area equal each other exactly.

To make a London Programme complete one must have seen a real fog in this town. I had it. What they call here a fog should have a special name. It would be an insult to the London Fog to call him just a fog. What I saw that evening, that was a floating white mass. This was a body; something like material, something you could touch with your hands. You could feel it slipping up your legs, permeating your clothes. It entered into your body through the nostrils, through your mouth; and some minutes later it was scratching in your throat. It pressed the smoke down from the chimneys, it penetrated through closed doors into the flats; and you could see it floating in the rooms. This white monster strangulated the traffic. Drivers had to stop their cars and had to walk home, trains crashed—damage and losses.

That night we had to grope our way from the gloomy shine of one lantern to the next, and I felt happy when at last entering the house.

Ten hours by train brought me to the cold hills of Scotland, where I paid a visit to a group of the Crown Film Unit. I was accepted like an old friend, we soon were a big family. Film people have a special 'something'. They find the way to each other quicker than other people do.

My way back to London seemed to me like going home (Not because of the 'Pubs'. They drink too much beer there.) I like the atmosphere of this big town. It's full of activity, full of optimism. This town is willing to rebuild what war has destroyed, its inhabitants say 'yes' to life, and it is agreeable to deal with them.

My last impression of England: the man of the Customs (I felt a bit nervous approaching the long low table). But he asked me kindly about what I had done in his country and how I liked it, and he forgot about looking into my handbags. (Thank you, friend!)

And here I am again in the train on my way back to Germany. To say it frankly: I feel like a prisoner whom they let for a time off, on his word. This train has a special car with signs at the windows 'For Germans'. The train-controlman says with a smile: 'Reserved for you.' I am the only German this time. The other cars are quite packed. After the first two hours the last car breaks down. All passengers of that car have to move into my reserved car.

We pass the German border. Heaps of rubbish, ruins, begging children at the rails. My heart is full of controversing thoughts. It will take some time before all new impressions have settled. But I may say already now: that country over the Channel is working hard to rebuild, it is full of activity, it wants peace.

I was given the possibility to have a look on the 'other side'. One gets a better understanding this way. Thank you for having give me this chance!

Arndt von Rautenfeld

ontd. from previous page

iestley pointed out that countries are prepared spend very much more on propaganda over-s than they subscribe to UNESCO. In 1947, itain alone spent £6 million on the Foreign ffice's overseas information services and the itish Council. By comparison UNESCO'S total dget for a world programme is a mere £2 illion, of which 75 per cent is subscribed by the SA. This financial disparity has been expressed another way by UNESCO itself. The total cost UNESCO's programme for world education is uivalent to the price of one light cruiser, or the ice of ten bombers. Can the price of peace be essed at such rates?

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Apologies and Corrections

In our last issue we published some reviews of films made by the National Film Board of Canada. We would like to apologize for one 'printer's error'. In the review of *Tomorrow's Citizens* 'unclean' should have read 'nuclear'. Also, we have been corrected on several points. *Montreal by Night* was made on 35 mm. and not on 16 mm. as implied; it was made for the theatrical market and is never shown on 16 mm. *Bronco Busters* has never been shown in black and white before—the COI cannot afford colour and so the National Film Board had a black and white print specially made.

We hope that the National Film Board will accept the apologies of the Editor and we thank them for sending in corrections so promptly.

Here is the Gold Coast, made for COI.

Camera and Direction: John Page. *Commentary:* D. M. Williams. *Music:* Guy Warrack. *Editor: and Producer:* Jim Mellor.

Theme. West Africa looks West.

Comment. There is in this film a wealth of good and interesting material—well shot, pleasantly photographed, often revealing—yet the film itself fails to get the best out of it. In a story as vital as the development of a backward people, there should be no feeling in the audience that it is too long; but, more than once, *Here is the Gold Coast* produces the reaction of a glance at the clock.

There are two main reasons why the film lags: it meanders not a little inconclusively through its subject and it is cursed by a singularly inappropriate and entirely supplementary musical score. More attention to its story construction and to the sound track (so weak in homely natural sounds) would have turned this film, with the same material, into an outstanding job. As it is, it shows us much in the lives of the people of West Africa that will be new to English audiences: it helps us to understand and to regard sympathetically many of their problems—and it reminds us, too, that some of the biggest problems (malnutrition, for instance) are only too international.

Atomic Physics made by GB Instructional.

Producer: Frank Wells. *Written and Directed by:* Derek Mayne, MA. *Photography:* J. Parker, I. Barnett, K. Talbot. *Assistant Director:* S. G. Fergusson. *Technical Advisor:* D. H. Wilkinson, PhD. *Animation sequences by:* GB Animation Limited.

GB Instructional have produced a detailed technical account of the subject in the five parts of the film *Atomic Physics*, and upon it they are to be congratulated.

The film makes no attempt to be other than a clear technical exposition, on something like fifth or sixth science form level, and is therefore pretty advanced for general use. But provided its five parts (about fifteen minutes each) are screened separately, there is no doubt that most adults at all interested in the progress of science, would get much from it.

The forethought of whoever ensured the recording on sound film of Lord Rutherford and Professor J. J. Thompson is to be greatly commended. Excerpts in the film of these two scientists, describing some of their contributions to science, are used directly as part of the commentary. At the end is a short sequence of Professor Cockroft putting into words once again the condition of our survival—that atomic energy be used sensibly. (This sequence, incidentally, is a good piece of direction as is, indeed, most of the film.) Two things must be said: in a subject of such international significance it would have been a great gesture to give perhaps a little *more* than full credit to foreign scientists. Where the only speakers are British, and where so much of the work *has* been done by British science, the result is bound to seem, to some foreign eyes, insular in conception. The film would have gained in stature if we had heard but a fragment of, say, Niels Bohr or Joliot Curie speaking in their own languages.

The other criticism is a simple technical one, that the commentary was sometimes a little over full and, hence, hurried. (Did the scientists run away with the film makers?)

One looks forward to hearing that this film will reach its proper audience in schools, universities, scientific film societies, and libraries throughout the world. In that setting it can b great landmark in British film making.

The parts are named as follows:

1. The Atomic Theory.
2. Rays from Atoms.
3. The Nuclear Structure of the Atom.
4. Atom Smashing: The Discovery of Neutron.
5. Uranium Fission: Atomic Energy.

For scientific film societies this film is rea made. But they will have to screen it in parts that their less learned members will not be behind.

A SCIEN

New Town. Halas-Batchelor for COI.

Direction and Story: Joy Batchelor and J Halas. *Music:* Matyas Seibar. *Voices:* J Train, Harold Berens, Dorothy Summers. *tribution:* CFL. T and Non-T. 10 mins.

Theme. The theory of town-planning—with tears.

Comment. There comes a time when all viewers hanker after a film meriting nothing praise. And so, after the spate of dull and do documentaries of 1947, this slight but enga cartoon is indeed welcome. Here are m honest laughs than in all the other films together—and, at the same time, a clear simple statement of the principles of to planning.

Introducing a new character, a shock-hea optimist called Charlie, this colour cartoon is of a promised series of popular discussions present-day developments. If the others come to the standard of *New Town*, it will be a m successful and useful venture. Lively, imag tive, and having a very real sense of fun, the manages in its short length to pack in as quite a number of the best reasons for a new tude to the building of our towns and citi even finding time for a brief but delightful in lude with Colonel Chinstrap whose partic approach to re-housing takes the *lico* out *pro bono publico*.

As an introduction to the still controver subject of town-planning, it is excellent; needs to be followed up by more factual f The pity of it is that it comes so late: both ki of films were wanted even more urgently th years ago. However, no doubt the Colonel h self would be the first to join in the sentim 'better late than never'.

Children of the Ruins, made by Crown F Unit for COI.

Distribution: T and non-T CFL. 10 mins.

Theme. Children of the Ruins deals with sufferings of the world's children. To millions are undernourished and disea though this was true of many before the war. minds suffer as well as bodies. During the children lost their parents, homes, they learn steal, even to kill. In pre-war Germany and I they were taught to honour and obey the po of a military State. Yet in many countries to the barest essentials for teaching, even pen are lacking. To repair some of the harm don children's minds is one of the jobs UNESC trying to undertake.

Comment. Designed as a monthly release for cinemas, *Children of the Ruins* sets out to gi general picture only. It relies mainly on lib material and its appeal is directly emotional. that is no excuse for a rather untidy script wh tends to blunt the course of the argum Nevertheless it is good to see a COI film o world theme made for theatrical showing.

New Town

t Ductus Arteriosus. Crown Film Unit for
try of Health through COI. *Photographed*
arry Waxman, assisted by Dr Brian Stan-
Animated by Science Films Ltd. *Diagrams*
vised by Dorothy M. Barber. *Distribution:*
non-theatrical. 25 mins.
. The pathology, diagnosis and operative
nent of Patent Ductus Arteriosus.
ment. Though little employed, one of the
valuable uses of film in technical subjects is
cording of rare events for audiences with-
pportunity for seeing them. In 1942 a record
nade at Hillingdon Hospital of an operation
he closure of a Patent Ductus, an event
iently infrequent for it to have been seen by
a small percentage of practising doctors.
that time, owing to the system under which
put out by the COI must have the sponsor-
of a Government department, it has appar-
languished in obscurity. Now at last, offici-
anctioned, it emerges into the light of day
fully fledged film. Our bureaucrats need
had no qualms; this is a first-rate job which
e of great interest and value to doctors in
in and overseas.
ent Ductus Arteriosus is a congenital con-
of the heart in which the foetal junction
en the aorta and the pulmonary artery re-
open after birth—until recently an incur-
condition. Using the language of its audi-
the film covers every aspect of the condi-
Beginning with a diagram sequence to ex-
the basic pathology, it then demonstrates
hysical signs and symptoms and X-ray ap-
nces in a case, and concludes by showing
sential parts of the operation for ligaturing
uctus with a commentary made by the sur-
himself at the time. Particularly effective is
e of synchronized sound during diagnostic
ltation and the demonstration during the
tion of the alteration of sounds when
e is carried out.
vitably, in a film made to hinge round a
d, there are a few rough edges, but the only
s criticism that can be made is of the
g. Here, to round off the film, a few pounds
on a brief examination of the case after
tion would have been well worth while.

Centre. Films of Fact Ltd. for Foreign
through COI. *Producer:* Paul Rotha.
tor: J. B. Holmes. *Photography:* James
ie. *Research and Assistant Direction:*
ton Gould-Marks. *Distribution:* Non-T.
20 mins.
. The working of the Pioneer Health Centre
ckham.
unded in 1935 the Pioneer Health Centre at
am soon attained a world-wide reputation.
s London suburb, two doctors originated
carried out an experiment in sociology (or,
correctly, human biology) of great scientific
Broken up by the war, the Centre has just
ted; now with growing interest in problems
cial Medicine' and with the introduction of
National Health Service, its importance is
bly greater than ever before. To the COI
fore all credit for promoting a film about its
; but why a film which, for all its excellen-
carries no real hint of the medical or socio-
l significance of this unique organization?
Peckham 'experiment' is described by its
lers as 'a study in the *living* structure of
y', and its function is inextricably linked
problems of health. This is a film about a
with good recreational facilities and some

Here is the Gold Coast

kind of medical supervision attached. Is the sponsor or the film maker to blame?

In a subject of this importance it is impossible not to let the background influence one's judgment; and this is the more maddening because, if divorced from previous knowledge, this is in fact a very good film. Well written and directed, it tells after a brief introduction about the Centre and the facilities it offers, the story of one young couple who joined it. They, like so many suburban families, were bored, lonely and lacked any opportunities for the development of their personalities in a communal life. The Centre provides the chance they need, and they make the most of it until, as a part of the routine medical check, it is discovered that the young wife needs an operation. This she refuses to believe, and as a result the family gradually drift away from the Centre. In the end, of course, she weakens, has her operation, and the family again return to the Centre to find that communal focus which is missing in the lives of most city dwellers.

This story the film puts over well; the characters are natural and the interest is sustained throughout. For those who have never heard of 'Peckham' it will serve to show how one community is solving some of the problems of urban existence. That perhaps is enough for a start—but the full study remains to be made.

Children Learning by Experience. Realist Film Unit for Ministry of Education through COI, in association with Film Centre.

Director: Margaret Thompson. *Producer:* John Taylor. *Associate Producer:* Dorothy Grayson. *Camera:* A. E. Jeakins. *Commentary:* Bruce Belfrage. *Distribution:* Non-T. CFL. 40 mins. *Intended audience:* Training Colleges, etc.

In his book 'The First Five Years of Childhood' Arnold Gesell observes the behaviour and reactions of hundreds of children in given test cases under ideal laboratory conditions.

Interesting as this sort of thing may be to the amateur child-psychologist, it is too studied, too 'guinea-piggish' to be worthy of more than textbook notice of the teacher who is fully occupied in children in the concrete rather than the child in the abstract.

One of the *March of Time* issues was centred round Dr Gesell's book and was a most interesting film for parents and teachers alike, but it was of passing academic interest and the very set-up of the one-way vision observation playroom divorced the children in the film from children in real life.

In the film *Children Learning by Experience* we are shown shots of children playing, working, doing things in natural surroundings. The episodes are unconnected except by a very tenuous thread of commentary, and the film differs from many other documentaries in that it sets out neither to teach nor to preach but only to illustrate to the student the *kind* of things which children do at different ages and to suggest that there may be causes for these actions and that it is up to the intending teacher to study these actions. In effect the film says 'Children are different from adults. If you are going to teach them you must try to discover how their minds tick over. Here we show you some of the things they can do or are likely to do at certain ages. Remember that this is only the average child (if there is such a being) and start your discussions from there.'

As material for the training college, it is very useful. Many trainees enter the colleges with very small first hand experience of the habits of children—this film, if seen not once but many times, will raise many problems in their minds and will set them thinking about vital aspects of the child mind which would not otherwise occur to them.

The film is divided into two parts, the first entitled 'All children want to learn', and the second 'Children learn through activity and experience'. The second section is subdivided into (1) practising simple skills, (2) understanding the world around, (3) learning at second-hand, (4) learning through play and imagination.

Any film about children and with good pictures of children has an initial advantage over any other film. This one is not about children in the accepted sense but the photography alone would set the cinema audience ooh-ing and aah-ing.

Some experts may not be so enthusiastic about its value, but some will consider it the most enterprising thing the Ministry of Education has yet done. One thing is certain—all those engaged in

(*Continued on page* 21)

reading for the month

NEW BOOKS ON FILM

Sound and The Documentary Film: Ken Cameron. With a foreword by Calvalcanti. (*Pitman.*) 15*s.* 0*d.*

For all the literature on films, there are still very few books on how they are made, other than specialized textbooks. Though the documentary movement has been particularly prolific in publication, till now directors, cameramen, cutters, and soundmen do not seem to have thought it worth while to describe their work in detail. One might suppose films grow on bushes, or are dropped down chimneys by storks for all the public attention their makers give to the creative processes of making them. For this reason alone, Mr Cameron's book is particularly welcome, and what he has to say is given weight by the fact that he is not only the best soundman in documentary today—his work includes both *Listen to Britain* and *Instruments of the Orchestra* —but also one of the best soundmen in the British film industry.

The first part of his book, introduced by a foreword by Calvalcanti, who is both a little patronizing and a little bad tempered, deals in a clear workmanlike way with the use of sound in films, the functions of the sound-recordist and the difficulties peculiar to his particular branch of film production. It is always interesting to listen to an expert describing his work in simple terms, and in this case we hope that Mr Cameron will be heard also by those of his colleagues who make up the rest of a film production team, and for some of whom the sound track is still only an irritating accessory. He recognizes, too, that a recordist's work does not end at the mixing panel, but should embrace both laboratory work and reproduction.

The second part of his book is a simple technical account of the electrical, mechanical and photographic principles of recording. The third part is a glossary of technical terms. There are many illustrations and line drawings.

Making the Movies. Jeanne Bendick. (*Paul Elek Ltd.*) 12*s.* 6*d.*

Here is yet another addition to the library of volumes which explain the production of a film from the script to the sneak preview to that presumably dwindling number of people who do not know. The book is illustrated by the author with a large number of somewhat childish drawings of equipment and processes of the film world, but while it contains a fair amount of accuracy of description, everything is treated with such ingenuousness that one seriously wonders whether it is intended for purely adolescent consumption. Although no printed reference appears to its possible American origin, nevertheless the terms used, and indeed the spelling of many of them have a distinctly Transatlantic flavour. It is scarcely fair to grumble at a work which does so little harm, but it seems a great pity that paper and time and money should be wasted in printing a book which attempts so much and yet achieves so little.

Film, a Reader's Guide. Roger Manvell. (*Cambridge University Press.*) 1*s.*

This essay and bibliography form part of a series issued by the National Book League. Manvell's introduction is a short but precise account of the main points one should pay attention to if one is interested in the cinema. The list of books should provide a useful guide for the new reader. Unfortunately, many of them are out of print, though they can be found in libraries. Also there are a number of important books not available here in translation which have had to be omitted. Aspiring translators and publishers please note.

Freedom of the Movies. Ruth Inglis. (*University of Chicago Press—agents, Cambridge University Press.*)

It seems a pity that writing was invented so long ago. We can only vaguely imagine the effect of the dawning power to transmit knowledge in permanent form from one person to another. But we can see this power as vital to the first great 'cultural revolution'. The invention which foments our second 'cultural revolution'—photography, however, is still very much with us. With motion, colour, and sound added, we get the film.

Seen by most to be one of the greatest social forces of our time, photography is becoming generally known as a new way of speaking to one another, as a way of using machines to help us think and talk more deeply. (Sometimes, of course, it just helps us talk more.) Yet a second truth is no less important; film is a form o expression which only *groups* of people can use.

Even the simple black and white snapshot ca only be made after camera and photo-film makers have co-operated; and the subject ha to co-operate before the trigger can be pressed Club facilities (such as darkroom and enlargin apparatus) are commonly used even by th amateur. Thus photography is a group activity And film making is a group activity—with a *minimum group size*, apparently of the order o a million or so people. (A community below thi size—like Andorra or Luxembourg—seems to small to have a film industry of its own.) Becaus film making is this kind of group activity *freedom*, in the commonly accepted individual istic sense of the word, is one of the things it i conspicuous for not having; the conceptio 'Freedom of the Movies' is thus in an importan sense a contradiction in terms, and the boo which Ruth Inglis, of the American Commissio on Freedom of the Press has written, sets u pretty clearly on the path to that conclusion without itself stating it very clearly.

'Freedom of the Movies' is largely an accoun of the censorship of films as it has grown up i the United States. Two things may come new t many; firstly, censorship both in America an Britain is a procedure imposed by the film indus try itself. 'The economic necessity of mass audi ences has made the industry eager to please every one', and profits cannot be risked at the hand of unpredictable pressure groups. Secondly, th censorship boards seem to have no statutor authority. Any film, censored or no, may still b the subject of litigation on the grounds o slander, libel, obscenity, sedition, or similar The Commission on Freedom of the Press se out six recommendations in a Statement. Th first of these gives the flavour of the whole:

> The constitutional guarantees of freedo of the Press should be recognized as includin motion pictures. The growing importance o the documentary film gives fresh emphasis t the need.

This reviewer, irresponsibly perhaps, finds th unrelieved comprehensiveness of the 'socio logical' style a strain. The only relief comes fro that mood of levity induced by reading th Production Code itself, quoted in full in it present form.

But apart from this the book fails to satis because it does not recognize that there wanted today a deeper, more complex conceptio of 'freedom' than served in earlier times. O does not demand that the sociologists should b inspired to provide this, but they must know w require it to come into existence.

DFN COMPETITION No. 2

Many people grumble at the programmes dish up in the ordinary commercial cinema. Here the opportunity to get rid of some of the pent-u venom.

Competitors are invited to write a letter remonstrance to a cinema manager whose pr grammes are not to their taste. Letters should limited to 200 words and entries should rea the Editor before March 1st.

The usual prizes of a guinea and half a guin are offered and results will appear in the Ap issue.

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MORE NEW FILMS

(*Cont. from page* 19)

training of teachers must see this film; ether they use it or not is up to them.

A TEACHER

National Film Board of Canada

Poulette Grise: Norman McLaren.
dle-De-Dee: Norman McLaren.
det Rouselle: Jim McKay and George nning.

en Norman McLaren was a member of the O Film Unit, way back in 1938, he made an erimental film, an animated colour film of the called 'cartoon' variety, called *Love on the ng*. In what now seems a somewhat crude ering he broke new ground, and gave us some- ng quite fresh and different. In *La Poulette rise* he has developed and polished his art to ch a remarkable degree that we really feel that have something new in the cinema. When the tle wooden loft doors which open his series of *ansons de Chez-Nous* open, we are carried for- rd into a dreamlike world of fantasy and agination that has an indescribable charm and auty all its own. Not only is its technical ency thrilling, but somehow or other McLaren hieves a weird stereoscopy that seems to take right forward into the middle of the picture. e gains a depth and intimacy unsurpassed by l Disney's Multiplane cameras. And one visual fect is varied and transformed so skilfully and acefully that we find ourselves looking at some- ing else without quite knowing how and when e change took place. The plaintive quality of e French-Canadian folk song makes *La oulette Grise* a wonderful companion to his rlier and gayer *C'Est L'Aviron*.

Fiddle-De-Dee is very different. Here McLaren as reverted to the style of colour rhythm origin- ated by Len Lye in his never forgotten *Colour-box*, and subsequently rather indifferently copied by Disney in *Fantasia*. A gay little violin tune is accompanied by abstract colour patterns on the screen. It is all delightfully done, but as one of the Review Board remarked, somehow dis- appointment comes at the end because we are not urged to post early for Christmas.

Finally, *Cadet Rouselle* is much more ortho- dox. The quaint cartoon figures delightfully illustrate the song, but it relies for its effect more upon the charm of the folk song than upon the originality of its technique.

All Eyes on Britain. Data for COI.

Producer: Donald Alexander. *Directed and Written:* Bladon Peake. *Associate Director:* Mary Beales. *Camera:* W. Suschitzky and K. Kettlewell. *Distribution:* Theatrical and monthly release. COI. 10 mins.

In the 1930's a foreign writer, turning a piercing and cynical eye on Britain, remarked that, in addition to claiming to be the most modest people in the world, we also claimed that we held the lead in everything else. This film shows that nothing has changed in the intervening years, except perhaps that what used to be a tacit assumption of superiority has become exceed- ingly vocal, with a suspicion of an hysterical edge to it. One may perhaps ask whether all this whistling in the dark is really necessary.

In *All Eyes on Britain* we see foreigners of every creed and colour flocking to Britain to congratulate us on our achievements in as many fields as can be packed into ten minutes. With one voice but many accents they say to the audience 'You see, you do it so much better than anyone else.' The treatment that the makers have chosen for this theme is a fantastic one— by *Hellzapoppin* out of *Upturned Glass*. Their object has doubtless been to avoid at all costs the pedestrian, unimaginative approach for which so many documentaries have been rightly criticized; but they have unfortunately not al- ways remembered the cardinal rule that the audience must be able to follow what is going on. The beginning of the film particularly is exasper- atingly confusing, less on account of the con- ception than of the presentation.

The Government's purpose in sponsoring this Monthly Release is presumably to bolster what it imagines to be the sagging confidence of the people; but what the effect will be is another matter. There are many reasons for thinking that films of this kind encourage the inert com- placency which is one of the Englishman's most besetting vices. Perhaps the Government will now consider sponsoring a film showing foreign- ers flocking to this country to complain with un-British bluntness about the shoddiness of some of our exports and the inefficiency of some of our institutions. It might have to be more than a one-reeler.

The Young Housewife. Anglo-Scottish for Scot- tish Education Department and Ministry of Education through COI. 10 mins.

This film is about the education of teen-age girls in the domestic sciences. It shows how, at a particular Scottish school, the pupils learn to plan the housewife's day, and to carry out various homely tasks in a way which will fore- stall the criticisms of their future husbands. The film is not ambitious, but it is made with skill and has something of the simple and tidy adequacy of a kitchen table. Here and there, there are neat touches of characterization and humour, and the girl who plays the principal part does so without fumbling. To say that there is nothing outstanding about the direction and camera- work is no more than saying that they have no noticeable faults.

THE BRITISH FILM ACADEMY

THE BRITISH FILM ACADEMY is a new organization ounded by the film-makers of Great Britain. It as first formed as the result of a conference held n the autumn of 1946, to which a large number f distinguished film-makers were invited. At this eeting a Committee was elected to prepare the cademy's constitution and policy and arrange r its formal registration as a non-profit-making ompany. The Chairman of this Committee was avid Lean; the remaining members were the on Anthony Asquith, Michael Balcon, Sidney ole, Thorold Dickinson, Sir Alexander Korda, rank Launder, Ronald Neame, Michael Powell, arol Reed, Paul Rotha and Harry Watt. In ugust, 1947, Dr Roger Manvell was invited to ecome the first Secretary-General of the Acad- my, and began his work in October, when the rst official General Meeting of the members of he Academy was called. Nearly a hundred film- makers were present at this meeting; the Consti- ution of the Academy was ratified, and its aims an now therefore, be outlined.

The introduction to the Academy's Constitu- ion read as follows:

The British Film Academy is an organization founded by the creative film-makers in the United Kingdom for the advancement of the art and technique of the film.

The aim of the Academy is to stimulate ex- ceptional creative work and to encourage ex- periment and research in all branches of the industry.

The Academy will co-operate with organiza- tions in this country and abroad which advo- cate similar ideals of international understand- ing and favour the development of the arts.

The Academy will start at once to build up a library of British film records, books, scripts, designs, musical scores, photographs and other material of importance. When this collection has assumed suitable proportions, the Academy hopes to promote or advise on the publication of books on the film, exhibitions of British film designs and photography and concerts of British film music. It will also encourage and assist in the compilation of world film statistics and informa- tion. The work of organizing the Academy's records and statistics is being undertaken by Miss Rachel Low, who joined the staff as Librar- ian and Statistician in December.

In the branch of public relations the Academy will act as an organization representing the views of the creative film-makers in the United King- dom. It will establish contact with all groups concerned with the artistic and technical ad- vancement of the film in the United Kingdom, the British Commonwealth of Nations and all other countries. It will also co-operate with educational organizations for the better appreciation and understanding of the cinema, and will encourage the foundation of university departments of film studies. It will encourage and possibly at a later stage, promote research and experimental work. It will make awards of merit for outstanding artistic, technical and scientific achievements. Finally the Academy is prepared to assist in the organization of film festivals at home and abroad.

For its members the Academy will arrange lec- tures, debates and private viewings of films. It is obviously of the greatest importance that British film-makers should meet informally to discuss the development of their art among themselves and with distinguished colleagues from abroad; the Academy hopes to become a centre for these activities.

The affairs of the Academy will be supervised by a Council elected from among the members. Membership itself is divided into two categories; people rendering outstanding service to the cinema may be nominated by Academy members, either as Honorary Members or as Members. Honorary Membership will normally be reserved for distinguished film veterans, production execu- tives and notable film-makers overseas; general membership is open to film-makers working on production in British studios or on professional research in connection with the film.

Newcastle experiment

Children's Cinema by D. George Bennell

IT IS frequently said that the noticeable lack of discipline in children's matinées on Saturday mornings cannot be improved without imposing such a strict 'class-room' atmosphere as would spoil the children's enjoyment.

This is one of the statements that can be disproved by a visit to the experimental Cinema Club organized by the Northern Counties Children's Cinema Council at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

There, soon after 9.30 the children began to arrive at the lecture hall above the News Theatre on Pilgrim Street. Two youngsters were giving out questionnaire forms, coloured for ease of analysis—pink for girls and blue for boys. Two or three grown-ups were giving out programmes and taking money from those children who have not paid at school. No ushers were needed: the children find their own seats, joining their friends in an easy, natural manner. There is no queueing, no pushing and no shouting either by the children or the attendants; the children have come for an outing and they enjoy their morning gossip before the show begins.

At about 10 o'clock lights went out, the film began and within a few seconds the voices of the children were hushed. This was a colour film, *The Nation's Wealth*; the print was somewhat dark and the light fluctuating but the children expressed their appreciation at the end. Then came *The Beginnings of the Cinema*, a completely silent film showing examples of the early days of cinematography. It is important to note how interested the children were, even in an old, silent film.

The next film was a coloured cartoon and the children hailed the title with expressions of delight; but at the end they gave it much the same applause as they had given to the other films. *Canadian Landscape*, a beautiful colour film showing the work of the painter, A. Y. Jackson, completed the first half of the programme.

When the lights went up for the interval, Mr Tunnah, the Club Director, climbed on to the platform and asked the children to fill up the questionnaire form. 'Do not try to put down what will please us,' he said. 'Put down just what you think. If you like the film very much, put a cross underneath "Yes"; if you do not like it, put a cross underneath "No"; if you think it is quite nice but not very good, just leave it blank. Now with regard to the next programme: we are hoping to make it a double number, that is, eight pages instead of four. But we shall need your help and I should like you to send in as many lino-cuts and poems as you can. The competition this month is to write a ghost story or play so will you do your best to send in entries.

'The next item is Christmas Cards. The com mittee have been thinking of making Christm Cards for members and we want to know ho many of you would like one.' (About thre quarters of the children put their hands up 'Then we also thought of having a Christm party; I am afraid the refreshments will be ver small, only tea and a bun, but how many woul like to come?' (Almost all the children wer thrilled at the prospect.)

In the second half of the programme th children saw *The Swan*, a nature film of th swannery at Abbotsford; *Safety First*, a silen film of Harold Lloyd; and *Wild Elephant Roun Up*, a thrilling sound film which showed th capture of wild elephants in Africa.

Thus, another of the popular statements ha been disproved. The Cinema Council have show that it is possible to give children a series o interesting, entertaining and even broadl educational programmes without recourse t second- or third-rate features or shorts. Some times the programme consists of a number o short films and sometimes of only two large films. But the result is the same: the childre thoroughly enjoy their own film shows.

A third important matter is the fostering of real club spirit. Some appreciation of this ha already been given and further evidence of it i afforded by the children's behaviour at the end o the show. When they go home, there is no helter skelter down the stairs, for many of them stay t chat with each other and with the grown-ups. I was, in fact, this need for time for conversatio that prompted the Committee to separate the tw shows which last year were given consecutively but which this year are arranged one in the morn ing and one in the afternoon.

During the week the Committee meets. Thi is composed largely of children and they make th real decisions. It is for their benefit that M Tunnah has asked for the numbers of childre who wish to attend the party or who wan Christmas Cards. Upon that response the Com mittee can decide whether it is worth whil printing cards and holding the party.

The work of the Northern Counties Children Cinema Council during last winter is explaine in the report which they have published (pric 1*s.* 1*d*, post free from Mr F. R. Griffin, 13 Holystone Crescent, Newcastle-on-Tyne).

The number of children, 250 at a time, is eas to handle. It could possible be increased to 350 the room were larger, but this figure is probabl the maximum that could be treated as a collectio of individuals instead of as a massed audience.

Of course, the Club has the great advanta that membership is a privilege; the numbe could easily be doubled if facilities were availabl The important result of limiting the membersh however, is that the general atmosphere is one confidence and real enjoyment, reflecting th spirit of a genuine Club with all the membe working together for the common good. provides an example for the rest of the countr but in order to succeed as it has in Newcastle needs the whole-hearted co-operation of th teaching profession.

THE FINAL STRAW

I hardly ever shave or have my hair cut,
I slop about in dirty corduroys;
On Friday nights you'll find me at 'The Pillars'
Commingling with the Documentary Boys.

I've never missed an article by Grierson,
I think I know Pudovkin off by heart;
I've lent a cigarette to Arthur Elton—
You'd think, to say the least, I'd made a start.

I've shouted out that Rank is Britain's Danger,
The Daily Worker's with me day and night;
I've shared the lift with Anstey at the Gargoyle,
And once I changed a wheel for Basil Wright.

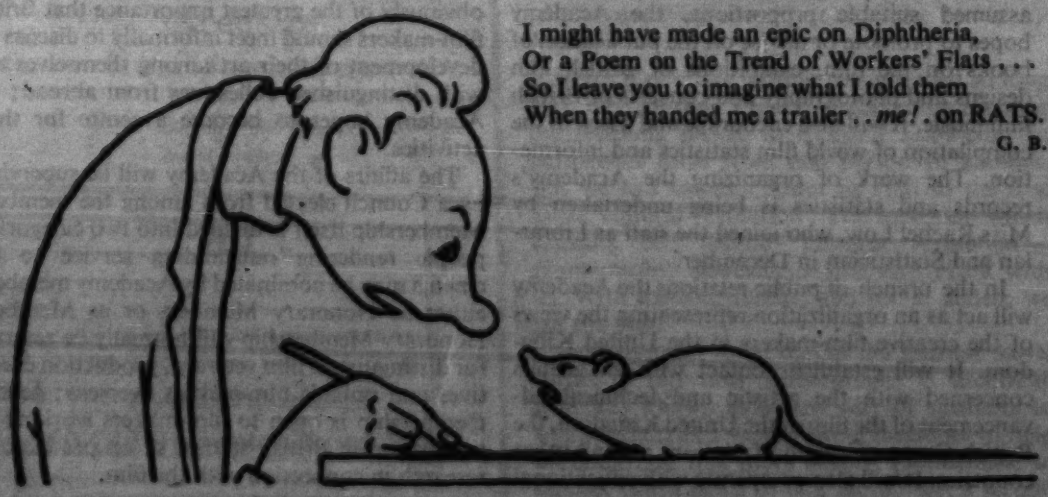
I'm always thinking up new camera angles,
I'm more 'Avant' than the keenest 'Avant Garde'
So, all in all, my treatment by the Unit
To say the very least was somewhat hard.

I handed in an outline on Neurosis,
At a meeting I said Korda was a Curse;
I wrote a script on Dysentery in Miners
With a commentary in very pregnant verse.

A five-reeler on the drains of Wolverhampton—
A subject which I've given all I've got—
And a feature on the Textile Workers' Birth-Rate
Are waiting in my brief-case to be shot.

I might have made an epic on Diphtheria,
Or a Poem on the Trend of Workers' Flats . . .
So I leave you to imagine what I told them
When they handed me a trailer . . *me!* . on RATS.

G. B.



CORRESPONDENCE

Death of British Documentary?

DEAR SIR: The sensitive observer had no need to await the verdict of the Brussels Film Festival to learn that the young genius of British documentary had died a premature death. Of course the cause is that there has been a war: but the war has not reduced the number of these films, rather otherwise. It is not quantity that has died, but quality.

Films are appearing in greater numbers and with greater technical proficiency, but—and here is the disturbing thought—with a depressing lack of inspiration and character.

Documentary had small beginnings, non-existent finance and infinitesimal technical facilities. To start on a film one required vast enthusiasm and tremendous belief in the worthwhileness of the subject to be filmed. The world was full (and still is) of subjects strong enough to inspire this enthusiasm, and here was a comparatively new medium with which to bring real things to the social consciousness of multitudes of the people.

Subjects were chosen; they saw the light as rough drafts. The enthusiasts talked to many people and in strange places; some thought they were mad. Little by little the jewels of truth emerged from the dross. The rough draft in the hands of the prime mover (who was usually the director and cameraman rolled into one) became little less rough and took shape, the film became alive, not always on paper, but sometimes crystallized in the mind of the director—not in terms of trolley shots, mixes, zooms and such like, but of hot facts, intimate disturbing realities of existence of which humanity is made up and which could be captured by the camera.

Now to express this belief in its chosen medium. Where can a camera be begged or borrowed? Who will give or lend some money?—not with which to pay high salaries, but just to buy film stock, for the early workers were more interested in their subject than in a rising bank balance. These were the real difficulties which had to be overcome before a start could be made.

Gradually the shape on paper and in the mind became the shape on film. Work was often physically hard because one was not in those days surrounded by a band of skilled assistants. Often it was exasperating. The camera, a borrowed one and not so good after all, was often temperamental. But finally the desired effect was obtained never of course so good as was intended; but in time—and sometimes it was not so long—the finished picture emerged; technically it was usually bad, sometimes shocking, but gleaming through the technical deficiencies there shone the light of truth and sincerity.

On such slender foundations as these was built the fame of British documentary.

Let us consider now the conditions which exist today, out of which has grown the disease and demise of British documentary quality.

Films of documentary class are not now produced by impecunious but enthusiastic freelances, but by production companies some of which, to their credit let it be said, are not primarily concerned with making large profits. A sponsoring body commissions a film to be made on a given subject, and a director is briefed to make an investigation and write a treatment which, under the producer's eye, conforms to the policy and tradition of the production company.

The treatment is now passed on to the sponsor, who will appoint a committee to consider the work. More often than not the members of this committee, though experts on the subjects of the film, know nothing at all about film construction or the impact of the filmic medium on the mind of an audience.

The committee proceed to analyse and disintegrate the treatment, so carefully built up by the director who knows the possibilities and limitations of the screen—each member advances and insists on his own particular point of view.

Sometimes there are several separate committees to be placated. The writer knows of one case where five committees scattered up and down the country all had to have their say, and this number may not be a record. The result could only be confusion worse confounded.

Treatments produced under these conditions are, at their best, composite affairs, and a director who starts on his shooting script with this background, and from this confusion of ideas and tries to rescue a crystal line of filmic thought has a heart-rending job on hand.

When the committee of non-filmic experts (who have by this time become filmically self-important) demand to see the shooting script then the battles have to be fought all over again.

By this time any original enthusiasm, which the director once had for his subject has long since evaporated and when the picture at long last attains completion, producer, director and unit have indeed been clever if they have combined most of the ideas of the committee and succeeded in preserving a semblance of sanity in its presentation.

Under these conditions a director with great potentialities may produce very indifferent films. Having been diverted from his true creative sphere he attempts to make up for the deficiencies of his script, of which he is only too conscious, by resorting to every technical trick he can bring in to rescue the film from dullness.

Documentaries have thus lost their original art of presenting truth by the power of simple sincerity and are becoming merely clever.

Where lies the light? If there must be committees and it seems there must, let them contribute to the film (instead of destroying it) by collecting and collating all the facts relative to the subject, and in their relative importance, before ever the treatment is started on, for which work they are probably well qualified, then leave the architecture of the picture entirely in the hands of the producing company, who surely are the most competent people to deal with it.

Yours truly,

RONALD GARDINER

Realist Film Unit
9 Gt Chapel St, London, W1

Scrapbook for 1922

DEAR SIR: I have always felt the past policy of anonymous reviews in the *DNL* to be open to many objections, and am glad to see that recently these objections have been met in some measure by herding all the newer members of the editorial board into a reviewing pen. Even so, it seems that, while avoiding the possibility of the unbalanced individual anonymous review, *DFN* has merely opened the doors to an unbalanced collective one. I refer to the review, in the January issue, of *Scrapbook for* 1922, which is grudgingly accorded just under two hundred lukewarm words, while another theatrical short, *Montreal by Night*, of no significance, gets almost double the space in the same issue.

I have seen *Scrapbook for* 1922 in the cinema, and in private, and have been struck not only by the way it grips its audience throughout its length, but also by the force of the perspective it gives to our present-day lives and problems. Looking back twenty-five years, to a time when another generation was wistfully regarding a mythical 'golden age', shows up our own glances over our shoulders today as the unrealistic indulgences they are. That implication in the film is unmistakable: and I can think of few more apposite or needful exhortations of the moment than that we should face forward to the future and not lean backwards to the past. The pity is that the film was not made a year earlier.

Admittedly, the film frankly shows more than a little interest in the 'box-office', but I submit that the very positive message it contains should not have escaped fourteen alert eyes and ears. Peter Baylis and his team are surely to be congratulated on having conceived, and so deftly made, a film which is likely to provoke constructive thought in its audiences at the same time as being a rattling good piece of entertainment.

Yours truly,

HUGH MENTARRI, MD

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CORRESPONDENCE *(contd.)*

The Nadir Films Controversy
Two more letters:

from Hector Bathos

DEAR SIR: As Mr Phillip Mackie, in his article 'Production History of a COI Film', mentions me perhaps you will permit me to make purely personal comments—much as I normally deplore unilateral action of any kind.

Mr Mackie is not quite correct in saying I was 'free to direct the film'. At that time *Pipette Suction* had reached a crucial stage (the start of the third year of writing), and I did not then know that *Blancho Application Technique*, which had only been recorded unsuccessfully with four different commentators, would be accepted as spoken by Graham Suave. Therefore, though not physically busy, I had a full and worried mind, and as a result never achieved a firm grasp of *Exteriosis*—did not even catch it.

Mr Mackie suppresses the fact that the briefing was attended by only nine people, of whom a mere six were subject experts. My heart sank, that afternoon, because I realized that really protracted disagreements, such as we were enjoying with *Pipette Suction*, would not be possible among so few consultants. I should not have nearly enough time to ponder deeply.

Though it may be tactless to refer again to *Pipette Suction*, which was not a COI film, I do think that the procedure adopted during its production (though far short of ideal) should be set against that of *Exteriosis*. We had a committee of sixty, from which we formed five sub-committees, each of ten members; one sub-committee for research, one to supervise the writing, one to supervise the shooting, one to view the rushes and one to superintend the editing. (As our cutting room is small, the latter sub-committee had to be sub-divided, working alternate shifts; but all members always debated every cut, mix and choice of shot.) I shall never forget my elation when the eighth re-take of shot ninety-two was chosen and I was able to appreciate that, just as no single word of the script had been written by myself, so had no single shot in the film been directed or edited as (unaided) I should have done it.

This was not the case with *Exteriosis*: there was too much of 'me' in it (about three per cent alas). But the fault arose out of the decision (which I opposed) to hurtle from investigation to show copy in two years, and the paucity of advisors of all kinds.

Let us sit together around tables larger and ever larger, in rooms bigger and ever bigger, talking more and ever more until our fine ideal is at last achieved: until the writing of a film becomes a lifework. Then cameras, lights, studios—even film stock itself—will be no longer necessary, and the heavy expenses which short-sighted production managers would have us merely *reduce*, will become *totally unnecessary*.

Yours faithfully,

HECTOR BATHOS
Nadir Films

and from Phillip Mackie

SIR: I was glad to see Nero Nonflam's letter about the Nadir film, *A Stitch In Time*. Nero is an old friend of mine—many a time, in the bar at the French Club, we have wagged our heads over Aims and Achievements—and he will not mind a couple of footnotes from me.

Nero is distressed by the absence of any reference to the producer. Of course, the producer *was* around the place most of the time, except for a Festival here and a lightning trip there. But I tried to keep my history as simple as possible, and if I'd brought in the producer I should have had to explain that complicated and tedious business about how Hector didn't get on with Teddy, and Clarence couldn't work with Pauline. Nero wouldn't have liked me to rake all that over again.

Nero has been misled by my words, 'Bathos and the PCO have a drink together'. 'A drink' is, of course, a collective term: a number of drinks. Hector and I paid alternately, and for my part I only wish I had an expense account.

I don't want to go over the budget business again; it's already cost me a week of my life and a packet of aspirins. May I just say that we asked for a simple straightforward £4,000 job, and it was really a little naughty of Nadir to write in that crowd scene at Runnymede that bumped up the final cost to £6,340. It was a good scene, though, and I for one was sorry that Hector took it out at rough-cut stage.

As for the factory shows, I do wish Nero had been able to go to one or two with me. It was really ~~most~~ encouraging to hear the expressions of surprise and delight at seeing an amusing documentary film.

Finally, may I wish the producer the best of luck in the feature world? There, I am sure, he will never have a project canned, a script revised or a budget cut; and his creative abilities will find the complete freedom that they deserve.

Yours, etc.,

PHILIP MACKIE,
Films Division

Hans Andersen

SIR: In these latter days the fragments of th distorting mirror broken by the demon in th imagination of Hans Andersen have obvious become widely dispersed among film makers. I consequence the public are daily tormented wi cleverness, cynicism, bitterness and distortio while it longs for beauty, truth, humour an tolerance. There has been a noticeable defectio of little Kays from their little Gerdas in the fil world.

Would it were possible for some public spirited individual to form a 'league of Litt Gerdas'.

Alternatively, could not the managers c cinemas arrange for us to put our feet up?

Yours sincerely,

PATRICK BLAC

String of Beads

SIR: Your Reviewing Panel state, in their notic of this Company's *String of Beads* in you January issue, that no theatrical distributio could be obtained. I am glad to say that thi situation has altered and that the film will no be distributed in this country by Metro-Goldwyn Mayer.

Yours faithfully,

PAUL FLETCHE

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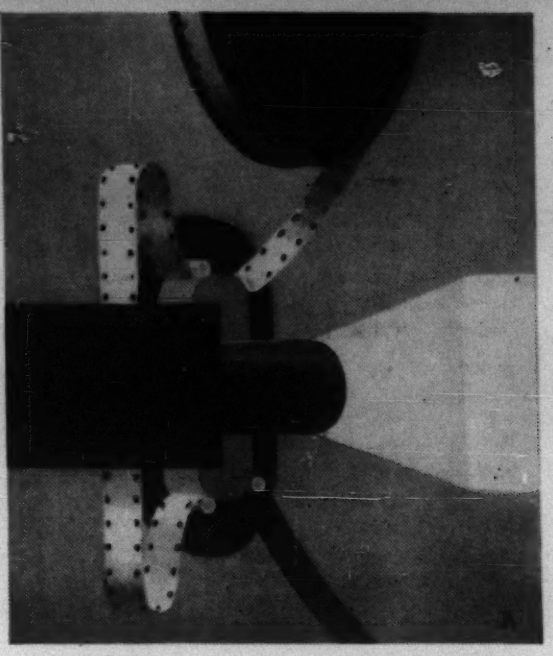

CINEMA

CREDIT for the actual invention of the cinematograph is difficult to apportion. It is certain that Englishmen played an important part. As long ago as 1860 Sir John Herschel published a theory of cinematography, and about 1889 a patent for a cinema camera and projector was applied for by W. Friese Greene and M. Evans. Today the cinema is our great relaxation. But how many of us who go to "the movies", who watch the latest performance of our particular "star", realise what the cinematograph industry owes to the workers in many branches of science and technology, and not least to the chemist? No other form of entertainment owes him so heavy a debt. Celluloid itself, the basis of the industry, is a chemical achievement. This must be transparent to give clear images after great magnification, resilient and tough to stand great strain. It must be so treated that the danger from fire is reduced to a minimum. The hand of the chemist is indeed traceable from the make-up of the actors to the lamps in the projectors. In the apparatus used for the sound-recording rare metals are needed: in the lenses of cameras and projectors, optical glass of the highest quality: in the colour-photography, pigments of the truest and most vivid colour. The sets for the ballrooms and palaces of the cinema's Cloudcuckoodom involve the use of large quantities of paints, quick-drying stucco and plasters: the costumes and draperies must be dyed. The tale is continued into the cinema theatre itself, in its decoration, its disinfection, its air-conditioning. When next you sit in your favourite cinema, think for a moment of the patient work in laboratory and factory that has enabled you to see the wonders of the world or the finest product of the cinematograph studio so clearly and still at so modest a price.

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